

SAGE Swingers Update May 2018

The following is an excerpt from an email from Brian Beckman, who is a leader in the Sage Swingers Club, to Jim Mayo.

The SAGE Swingers (dba SAGE Square and Round Dance Club) is, indeed, still going strong maintaining a membership total of around 110. A number of those members are also members of other clubs as well. Keeping that membership total as I had indicated to you last year continues to be a challenge as primarily that core group of leaders/dancers are now mostly in our 70's and a few in their 80's. Still, we seem to be vibrant and keeping our club focus on the mainstream dancer making it as inclusive of an activity as possible. Having a combination of strong and willing leaders, a club caller who understands our strategy, a mainstream level focus and most importantly emphasizing the social aspects of our activity have been keys to our success. We continue to host and raid only primarily mainstream dances. We still make it a point to try and dine together when raiding and even at times when we host a dance. We continue to hold special club events for bonding purposes such as a barn dance, a weekend of dancing with Ted at OOB, an annual lobster bake, after hour parties at conventions and the OOB event. Unfortunately, we have an increasing number of our dancers who have health issues and we try to be vigilant in providing them support in the form of cards and/or visits.

We still try to bring in national callers on an annual basis for the enjoyment of the dance and for dancers who would not otherwise get a chance to dance/hear such talented callers and, yes, those are all mainstream level dances. A few clubs in Maine seem to be struggling lessening our support base to be able afford to bring in national callers which is a concern of our club. Also, know we continue to work very hard at recruiting and retaining our new people which is not easy as you know with the competition for their time that exists in our society. One of our long term members brought up a point that I wanted to share with you which involves Contra dancing. This activity seems to be growing in popularity in Maine and perhaps other parts of the country. You might want to look at the dynamics of that activity which I know to be more simplistic than MWSO and somewhat supports your point of making our activity more social with less of a commitment.

I hope this response provides you some support for the points you have been trying to make. I believe, we are into about our 18th year of maintaining the strategy we set out to do around the turn of the century. In personal discussions with Paul Cote, he believes our success has been more about our strong leadership. I've always felt though it is the social things we do as a club combined with the mainstream focus that has allowed us to do what we have done. Advanced level dancers, in my opinion, do not have the time or inclination to do what is necessary to cultivate the new dancer. One additional point is that we do have a strong contingent of plus level dancers which we foster basically on a not to interfere basis with our mainstream focus. Additionally, most of our plus dancers know they may have to get their "fix" elsewhere, but, support our club earnestly when they can by angeling at all of our workshops and attending our mainstream level dances.

r/Brian